DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 464 967 UD 034 969

AUTHOR	Mattessich, Paul
TITLE	Speaking for Themselves: A Survey of Hispanic, Hmong, Russian, and Somali Immigrants in Minneapolis-Saint Paul.
INSTITUTION	Wilder Research Center, St. Paul, MN.
PUB DATE	2000-11-00
NOTE	21p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Wilder Research Center, Suite 201, 1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Saint Paul, MN 55108. Tel: 651-647-4600; e-mail: research@wilder.org. For full text: http://www.wilder.org/research/reports.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Acculturation; Adjustment (to Environment); Coping; *Cultural Differences; Elementary Secondary Education; Employment; English (Second Language); Ethnicity; Hispanic Americans; Hmong People; *Immigrants; Refugees; Stress Variables; Urban Areas
IDENTIFIERS	Latinos; Minnesota (Minneapolis); Minnesota (Saint Paul); Russians; Somalis

ABSTRACT

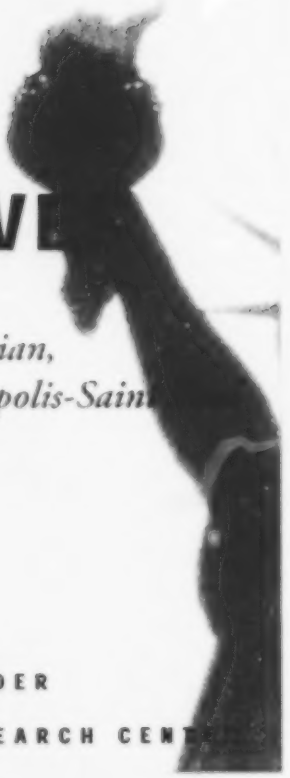
This study examined reasons for the recent wave of immigration to the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, area, interviewing Hmong, Somalis, Russians, and Hispanics/Latinos who were born outside of the United States. Interviews examined reasons for leaving the native land, what immigrants found when they arrived, and how they coped and adapted. Most immigrants moved to the United States after 1970. Most of the Hmong, Russians, and Somalis left their native lands because of fighting or danger. Most people immigrated for family and employment reasons. Most spoke a language other than English at home, about one-third speaking English very well, and one-fifth not speaking English at all. One in four immigrants took classes to improve their English. Most immigrants said that Americans were usually friendly to them. Nearly half missed their native land and hoped to return, while one-third missed it but were glad they left. Distinct differences between the groups included: Hispanics were most likely to feel that their children's teachers knew enough about their culture, Hmong were most likely to report mean or unkind treatment by Americans, Russians were most likely to be glad they left their native land, and Somalis were most likely to hope to return to their native country someday. (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 464 967

SPEAKING FOR THEMSELVE

A survey of Hispanic, Hmong, Russian, and Somali immigrants in Minneapolis-Sain



WILDER
RESEARCH CENT

NOVEMBER 2000

UD 034 969

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. W. Mattessich
Wilder Research Ctr.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

The full text of this report is available on the Internet at www.wilder.org/research/reports.

For more information, or to order printed copies, contact:

AMHERST H WILDER FOUNDATION

Wilder Research Center
Suite 210
1295 Bandana Boulevard North
Saint Paul, MN 55108

651-647-4600
research@wilder.org

Study director: Paul Mattessich
Saint Paul Pioneer Press project director: Kate Parry

Why do people leave their native lands?

What draws them to a new place?

What do they find when they get there?

How do they cope, adapt, and become part of their new community?

Their stories are as varied as the places they come from and the time and place of their arrival. This survey illuminates some common, perhaps universal themes in the immigrant story, but also highlights some important and fascinating nuances for each recent "wave" of immigration to the Twin Cities area.

The impetus for this research project came from the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, which commissioned the poll as part of a seven-week immigration series called "The new face of Minnesota." Funding for the study came from the Knight-Ridder Foundation.

While many surveys ask people's views about immigrants, this one asks immigrants to speak for themselves. Still other studies provide a detailed view of a few people's experiences, but without the big picture, it is difficult to know how typical they are. And finally, while many immigrant studies focus on a single group, this one compares the experiences of four major groups living in the same community. We have not found any other projects quite like this one.

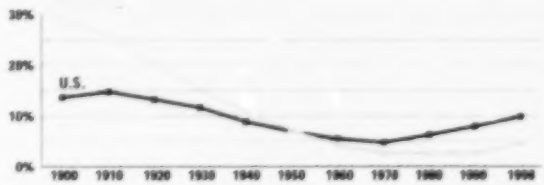
Throughout history, people have moved from place to place in search of better opportunities or to leave behind bad circumstances — or often for a mix of both reasons. Moving far away usually means starting over in many ways: learning a new language, rebuilding educational and work credentials, and learning the new rules (both written and unwritten) that govern everything from how you shop to how you raise your children. The more different the new place is from the old one, the more challenging the adjustment can be.

To support one another through these difficulties and adjustments, immigrants commonly have traveled and resettled together in families, kin groups, and larger networks. The earliest arrivals in a new place often attract others from their native lands, paving the way for large numbers of people to develop a new community or settle into an existing community. For example, although refugees may have little choice in where they are first sent in the United States, many subsequently move to places where more of their countrypeople have settled. U.S. immigration policy places a high priority on reuniting families, so a large portion of immigrants are admitted to the United States in order to join close relatives. All of these factors contribute to the growth of established immigrant communities.

Minnesota has always had a large number of immigrants from other places in the world, although they currently make up a much smaller percentage of the population than in the past — just 2.6 percent in 1990, compared to 28.9 percent in 1900. The most recent figures from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate an upswing in the number and percentage of immigrants, both in Minnesota and nationwide.

The points of origin for these new Minnesotans have changed over time, influenced by world events (war, upheaval, economic conditions) and tightly governed by national and international policies that limit how many immigrants can enter the country, from where, and for what reasons.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION BORN IN OTHER COUNTRIES



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.
Note: Data for 1900 to 1990 are from the decennial census; 1998 data are from the Current Population Survey, March 1998.

MINNESOTA IMMIGRATION RANKS NEAR THE MIDDLE

		STATE RANK
Total number of immigrants	217,000	20
Immigration in the 1990s	98,000	19
Immigrants as a percentage of state population	4.6%	24

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1998.

COLD ENOUGH FOR YOU?

A major change in climate can require a big adjustment, and many Minnesota immigrants come from much warmer places. However, 64 percent of the people surveyed reported that they "like winter and snow." Not surprisingly, Russians (88%) most likely felt this way, and Somalis (36%) were least likely to share an affection for winter.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

After screening more than 12,000 households randomly chosen from neighborhoods known to have high concentrations of immigrants, we interviewed 1,119 people who were born outside the United States. The response rate was 74 percent of the immigrants invited to participate.

The random sampling method gives scientific validity to the survey. However, the focus on neighborhoods with high numbers of immigrants introduces a bias that is important to remember when using the results. The respondents to this survey are those who live in "clusters" of foreign-born people. The results can be generalized to these populations, but not to immigrant households that are scattered among predominantly native-born American households.

The survey included:

- 276 Hmong adults
- 218 Somali adults
- 198 Russian adults
- 200 Hispanic or Latino adults (Mexico, Central America, South America)

The survey also included 227 immigrants from other countries. Their responses are included whenever we report overall results for a question.

GENDER

Women	55%
Men	45%

AGE

18 to 29	32%
30 to 39	24%
40 to 49	14%
50 or older	30%

The Russian respondents were substantially older than the others: 83 percent were age 50 or older.

EDUCATION

Less than high school	34%
High school or higher	66%
4-year college degree or higher	38%
Graduate degree	6%

Russians were most likely to have college diplomas or advanced degrees (55% of Russians, in contrast to 22% of Somalis, 13% of Hispanics and 6% of Hmong). On the other end of the spectrum, 66 percent of Hmong and 53 percent of Hispanic respondents had less than a high school education.

NUMBER OF ADULTS IN HOUSEHOLD

One	30%
Two	48%
Three or more	22%

Somalis (48%) were most likely to be living alone; Hispanics (17%) were least likely.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD

None	51%
One	14%
Two	12%
Three	7%
Four	4%
Five or more	12%

MARITAL STATUS

Married, living with spouse	51%
Never married	22%
Divorced, widowed, or separated	18%
Married, spouse lives elsewhere	6%
Marriage-like relationship	3%

Hmong (70%) and Russians (58%) were more likely to be married and living with their spouse than Hispanics (47%) and Somalis (30%).

Somalis were more likely than others to be married with a spouse living elsewhere (18% of Somalis in contrast with 8% of Hispanics, 2% of Russians, and 1% of Hmong).

"CHOOSING" TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES

Legal immigrants are people who can legally live and work in the United States for an unlimited time.

It's important to realize that people from other countries cannot simply decide to come to the United States and then move here. There are two main ways to apply: as an immigrant or as a refugee.

FAMILY-SPONSORED IMMIGRANTS

Up to 480,000 visas per year

- Top priority: immediate family of a U.S. citizen who is willing to sponsor them and has a proven ability to financially support them.
- Lengthy waiting list: immediate family of a U.S. legal resident (not a citizen) who is willing to sponsor them and has a proven ability to financially support them.

EMPLOYMENT-BASED IMMIGRANTS

Up to 140,000 visas per year

- "Priority workers" such as professors, researchers, or high-level managers of multinational corporations.
- Professionals with advanced degrees
- Skilled workers in high-demand fields
- "Special immigrants" such as clergy or foreign medical graduates
- "Investor" immigrants who will invest $500,000 to $1 million to start or buy a U.S.-based business, providing at least 10 full-time jobs.

DIVERSITY LOTTERY

Up to 55,000 visas per year

- Allotted to countries that are underrepresented in other forms of U.S. immigration.
- Applicants must be age 18 or older, with the equivalent of a high school diploma.

REFUGEES

Before 1980, anyone seeking to leave a Communist-dominated or Communist-occupied country or a Middle Eastern country was practically guaranteed refugee status in the United States.

The Refugee Act of 1980 sought to base the decision more on the person's actual circumstances than simply on where they were from. However, certain groups have sometimes still had special status because they are considered likely targets of persecution, such as religious minorities in the former Soviet Union, or certain categories of people from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

Refugee status is granted on a case-by-case basis, decided through an interview with a U.S. immigration official. Considerations include:

- Actual experience or well-founded fear of persecution because of one's political opinion, religion, nationality, race, social group, or because of coercive population control measures
- General conditions in the country of origin

ASYLUM SEEKERS

The criteria are the same as for refugee status. The only difference is in where the application takes place. Refugee applications occur before a person enters the United States. Asylum requests come from people who are already in the United States. Highly publicized examples would include athletes or artists who seek asylum while touring in the United States.

LEARN MORE

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service: www.ins.usdoj.gov

U.S. Census Bureau: www.census.gov

National Association of Foreign Born: foreignborn.com

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Almost 60% of these new arrivals came to the United States during the 1990s. Ninety-five percent came since 1970. About half (56%) came directly to Minnesota. The others first lived in other locations, then came to Minnesota later.

WHY THEY LEFT HOME

About three-quarters of those from Southeast Asia, Somalia, and Russia said that they left their native country because of fighting or danger. This matches the fact that large groups from these countries were originally admitted to the United States as refugees. However, even refugees often have a mix of motivations for moving, such as jobs and educational opportunities.

COMING TO THE UNITED STATES

Family is the number-one reason why most people move to the United States. Once a spouse or a close relative has moved here, the family often tries to get back together as soon as possible, and U.S. immigration policy supports the reunification of families.

Overall, Twin Cities immigrants named family (71%) and employment (45%) as the top reasons for wanting to come to the United States. Hispanics (79%) and Somalis (54%) were most likely to report that finding a job was a top motivation for coming to the United States.

The heavy involvement of Minnesota groups and individuals in serving as refugee sponsors has been a factor in establishing immigrant communities here. Each refugee must be assigned a sponsor before being admitted to the United States. The sponsor, either an individual or a group, agrees to provide certain kinds of assistance such as finding a place to live and enrolling children in school. Somalis (51%) were the group most likely to report being sponsored by a group. Hmong (37%) were the group most likely to report being sponsored by an individual.

COMING TO MINNESOTA

A little more than half of the immigrants (58%) came to Minnesota as their first residence in the United States. The rest lived somewhere else in the United States, then moved to Minnesota. Russians were the most likely (94%) to have come directly to Minnesota; least likely were Somalis (38%) and Hispanics (41%).

Those who lived elsewhere first were asked to respond "yes" or "no" to a list of reasons for moving to Minnesota, and they could choose more than one reason. The top responses:

- ***Family or friends were here*** (64%). This was less often mentioned by Hispanics (43%) and more often mentioned by Hmong (86%).

- ***Jobs were available*** (58%). This played a smaller role for Russians (25%), which is not surprising given their older average age — 82 percent were age 50 or older.

- ***Welfare benefits were good*** (11%). This played a relatively small role in all groups, despite evidence that immigrants tended to interpret "welfare benefits" quite broadly to include things like education financial aid.

- ***People were hostile or unfriendly in other parts of the United States*** (10%).

- A variety of other factors influenced small numbers of people to move to the state.

LANGUAGE ABILITY

Almost all immigrants said they speak a language other than English most of the time at home (86% to 98% in all four groups).

About one-third reported that they can "speak and understand English very well." Somalis (39%) were the most likely to have this level of confidence; Russians (13%) and Hmong (12%) were the least likely.

At the other end of the spectrum, about one-fifth stated that they cannot speak English at all. Hmong immigrants (40%) were most likely to put themselves into this category, and Somalis (11%) were least likely.

About two-thirds of respondents (63%) said they can read English well enough to understand a daily newspaper (36% can read an English-language newspaper "completely," while 27% said "some" or "a little"). Again, Somalis had the highest comfort level with English — about three-fourths said they could read and understand the newspaper, as opposed to only about half in the other three groups.

About one in four of the immigrants were taking classes to improve their English skills. Among those who did not speak English, Somalis were most likely to be taking English classes.

HOW AMERICANS TREAT THEM

Eight out of 10 respondents said that the Americans who live in Minneapolis and Saint Paul are "usually friendly" to them. (For Russians, this was as high as 99 percent.) Seven percent felt people are "usually not friendly;" and 10 percent said they couldn't give an answer.

When asked, "Are they [the Americans who live in Minneapolis and Saint Paul] ever mean or unkind to you?" about three-quarters of the immigrants said no. Hmong (36%) and Hispanics (29%) were more likely than Somalis (19%) and Russians (6%) to report mean or unkind treatment.

Of the 25 percent who reported mean or unkind treatment, about one-fourth (or 5% of all respondents) said this happens "often." About three-fourths (or 18% of all respondents) said "just sometimes." Nearly half (44%) of those who experienced ill treatment said that particular groups have been mean or unkind to them. When asked for specifics, they named a wide variety of groups — primarily by race (fairly evenly divided among whites and blacks), by age (the old, the young), or by situation (police, suburbs, government workers, coworkers).

An unexpectedly high proportion (about 40%) agreed with the statement that "People in the United States understand what life was like in your native country." Additional research should explore this puzzling finding, to see if translation issues or other factors influenced the result. Anecdotal evidence from survey interviewers indicates that at least some respondents gave contextual comments such as "The people in my circles understand" or "They understand me when I explain how things were."

However, a different question about their children's school experience yielded similar results: About two-thirds of parents felt that their children's teachers know enough about their culture.

Hispanic parents (74%) were most likely to feel this way; Russian parents (42%) were least likely. This may relate to the fact that Hispanic migration to the Twin Cities has a longer history, as well as to the closer geographic proximity of Mexico to the United States.

FEELINGS ABOUT LEAVING HOME

The survey asked immigrants to choose which of several statements best described their feelings about leaving their country of birth. The responses, in order of prevalence:

- ***I miss it, and I hope to return someday in the future*** (46%). This strong attachment to one's home country varied widely by immigrant group: 69 percent of Somalis, who are also the most recently arrived group; 61 percent of Hispanics, who were least likely to have left home because of fighting or danger; 54 percent of Hmong, who left because of danger in their homeland; and only 3 percent of Russians, many of whom left because of religious persecution.

- ***I miss it, but I'm glad I left*** (34%). This was the majority view among Russians (62%) but a minority view in other groups (20% to 26%).

- ***I don't miss it, and I'm glad I left*** (13%). Again, Russians (35%) were far more likely to feel this way; among other groups, only 6 percent to 7 percent subscribed to this "good riddance" viewpoint.

- ***No response*** (5%).

- ***I wish I had not left*** (3%). This sentiment was rare in all groups, perhaps reflecting the severity of conditions in the places they left behind.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Asked whether they considered themselves more American or more Somali, Russian, etc., 74 percent identified more with their native culture, 19 percent considered themselves more American, and 7 percent were not sure. This was fairly consistent across the four immigrant groups.

This finding says something not only about the immigrants, but about the current American social climate regarding cultural identity. At some times in history, immigrants have had strong reasons to proclaim themselves "Americans first." For instance, during the two world wars, immigrants who were loyal to their native language and culture were often viewed as anti-American. In contrast, the immigrants in this study clearly felt free to say that their deepest identity was with their native culture.

Do they want to become more a part of American culture? Fifteen percent said yes, while 38 percent said they would rather keep up the language and ways of their native culture. Notably, fully 47 percent rejected the survey's attempt to avoid the easy "both" answer and determine whether people leaned in one direction or the other. That is, about one in two immigrants volunteered that they wanted to embrace both cultures.

THE NEXT GENERATION

For their children, immigrants hoped for a similar commitment to both cultures. Sixteen percent said that their children, when they grow up, should try to be as much as they can like Americans; 33 percent said their children should keep as much of their original culture as possible; and 51 percent indicated that their children should "do both."

Again, the option of embracing both cultures was not presented to respondents, yet more than half said that they wanted their children to do both, refusing to choose one or the other.

They also hoped the next generation would keep up their own language as well as speaking English; fewer than 5 percent in any immigrant group thought it was "OK for children in your family to just speak English and forget their native language."

As for marriage, the view was more mixed. Fifty-nine percent said it is OK for people in their family to marry someone from another culture; 28 percent thought they should marry only within their own culture; and 13 percent did not offer an opinion. Hispanics (86%) were most likely to feel that marriage outside their own culture was acceptable; Hmong (39%) were least likely.

CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

About half the respondents had at least one child under age 18 living in their household. Hmong households had the highest average number of children (3 to 4) and Russians had the lowest (less than 1).

Thirty-nine percent of households had children in public or private school in Minnesota, and almost all of them (92%) had visited their child's school. Eighty-five percent said they feel that their children are safe at school.

As previously discussed (see "How Americans treat them"), about two-thirds of parents felt that their children's teachers know enough about their culture. This varied somewhat among the four immigrant groups; however, in all groups but Russians, it was the majority view.

Hispanic	74%
Hmong	68%
Somali	60%
Russian	42%

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

Each of the four immigrant groups has a variety of religious identifications but a definite majority religion.

Hispanic	88% Christian (77% Roman Catholic)
Hmong	66% Shamanistic
Russian	58% Jewish
Somali	81% Muslim

Almost one in five immigrants (17%) reported some difficulty practicing their religion here in the United States. The survey did not ask whether that difficulty had to do with language barriers, lack of organized groups or religious leaders, legal or social obstacles to carrying out ceremonies or rituals, or conflict related to religious lifestyle regulations, but there is anecdotal evidence for all of these issues.

Only 7 percent of the immigrants reported that since they moved to the United States, they have "ever felt pressure to change to a new religion." This was somewhat more common among Hmong immigrants (13%) than the three other groups (1% to 4%).

DOING "MINNESOTA" THINGS

We asked immigrants whether they had been places and done things that might be considered typically Minnesotan.

Visited the Mall of America	**89%**
Visited a park	**88%**
(but only 61% of Somalis, compared to virtually everyone in the other three groups)	
Used a public library	**78%**
Gone to the movies	**62%**
Gone to the State Fair	**60%**
Visited a museum	**59%**

Many people were able to name specific museums they had visited, including:

Science Museum of Minnesota	**33%**
Minneapolis Institute of Art	**19%**
Children's Museum	**7%**
(out of all respondents, not just those who had been to a museum)	

EMPLOYMENT

Fifty-four percent of the respondents have a job for pay. In 62 percent of the households, at least one adult is working. Age has a major influence on employment status among these immigrants. The median age is 59 for respondents who said neither they nor their spouse is working. For those where one or both is working, the median age is 32.

This may help to explain why employment is particularly low among the Russians who participated in the survey; they were a much older group. If we exclude Russian immigrants, 70 percent of the immigrant households had one or more adults working.

The jobs held by these workers support the common observation that immigrants tend to enter the workforce in lower-pay, lower-skill jobs. Almost half the workers in this survey (44%) hold unskilled labor or service jobs, compared to 24 percent in the general Twin Cities workforce, according to the 1990 census.

However, the differences tend to level out in several higher-skill job categories. Immigrant workers in this survey are just as likely as other Twin Cities workers to hold a professional, technical, or skilled trade job. The one category where immigrants are strikingly scarce is in management and supervision.

JOBS HELD BY IMMIGRANTS, COMPARED TO GENERAL POPULATION

	Immigrant workers (N=587)	All Twin Cities workers (1990)
Driver, machine operator, assembly work, laborer	**28%**	**12%**
Service (maintenance, cook, nursing aide)	**18%**	**12%**
Clerical (bookkeeper, bank teller, office support)	**17%**	**18%**
Professional (teacher, engineer, nurse, doctor)	**13%**	**15%**
Sales (includes cashiers and store proprietors)	**7%**	**13%**
Technician (lab worker, computer programmer)	**7%**	**5%**
Precision trades (electrician, mechanic, baker)	**6%**	**9%**
Management, administration	**3%**	**14%**

Notes: Twin Cities workforce data are from 1990 and cover the 11-county Metropolitan Statistical Area. Jobs in farming, forestry, and fishing are omitted (negligible numbers).

Sources: Wilder Research Center (immigrant data); U.S. Bureau of the Census (Twin Cities comparison data).

Longer time in the United States seems to correlate somewhat with higher-level or higher-paying jobs among immigrants in this survey. Those working in management have lived in the United States noticeably longer. The number of respondents working in management is relatively low (18), but most of them arrived prior to the major waves of Hmong, Russian, and Somali immigration to Minnesota.

Possible factors in the correlation between residency and job level include the extent to which different kinds of jobs require English fluency, social and cultural "fluency," education or technical training, or a process of re-accreditation or re-licensing for professionals trained in other countries.

JOBS HELD BY IMMIGRANTS, BY LENGTH OF TIME IN U.S.

	Median years in U.S.
Management, administration	20.5
Precision trades (electrician, mechanic, baker)	13
Professional (teacher, engineer, nurse, doctor)	11
Clerical (bookkeeper, bank teller, office support)	11
Driver, machine operator, assembly work, laborer	9
Technician (lab worker, computer programmer)	8
Service (maintenance, cook, nursing aide)	8
Sales (includes cashiers and store proprietors)	7

Note: Median means the point at which half are higher and half are lower.

STRESS RELATED TO BEING AN IMMIGRANT

The survey asked people to name their greatest current sources of stress related to being an immigrant. Language was by far the greatest concern. Other stresses included some things specific to the immigrant experience, as well as common concerns shared by many non-immigrants but compounded by language and culture differences.

A surprisingly high number of people said "nothing" caused them the most stress. It is impossible to say how many of these people felt no particular stress (perhaps comparing their current life with the extreme circumstances they left behind) and how many felt so many different kinds of stress that it was hard to choose one. Anecdotal evidence from survey interviewers suggests that one or the other of these interpretations applied to certain respondents, and there could be other translation or cultural issues.

GREATEST SOURCES OF STRESS FOR IMMIGRANTS

Language barrier	28%
"Nothing"	10%
Separation from family/friends	8%
Health problems	7%
Money problems	7%
Jobs (finding, keeping)	7%
Homesickness/isolation	6%
Raising children	6%

GETTING NEWS AND INFORMATION

Asked what is the single most important type of news for them, Twin Cities immigrants prioritized this way:

News about the world	50%
News about Minnesota	22%
News about their home country	14%
Don't know	9%
News about local ethnic community	4%

More than half (55%) of the respondents said they read the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* or the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* at least sometimes. Only slightly more (59%) said they read other newspapers, including papers from their ethnic community or in their native language.

Respondents turn to different sources for different types of news:

Top source of local Minnesota news	Television 60%
Top source of local ethnic news	Family and friends 73%
Top source of news about their home country	Family and friends 74%

The Internet also is a significant source of news and information for immigrants. Nineteen percent to 28 percent ranked it as their top source for various types of news (world, local, ethnic community, country of origin).

DISTINCTIVE FINDINGS FOR THE FOUR MAJOR GROUPS

This survey revealed some fascinating differences and similarities among four sets of immigrants living in the same city at the same time. The following pages display descriptive information about each group, and highlight some distinctive findings that emerge from statistical analysis of the survey results.

Different immigrant groups tend to have quite different experiences before, during, and after arriving in the United States. In a sense, each group enters a slightly different America, influenced by the current local economy, social and political climate, and racial and ethnic relations. For example, someone entering a community with little ethnic diversity and limited employment opportunities has a much different experience than someone entering an ethnically diverse urban environment during an economic boom.

Other differences are inherent in the immigrant groups themselves. The Hmong, Russian, Somali, and Hispanic groups arrived in Minnesota from very different places, with different education levels, religious beliefs, family styles, and with different physical features and ways of dressing that can influence how they are perceived and treated.

Finally, while immigrants from the same country or region share many characteristics and experiences, by no means are they homogenous groups. Very few of the responses were close to unanimous within a single immigrant group. Thus while it is important to understand as much as possible about norms and differences among groups, it is also important not to turn these insights into stereotypes and assumptions.

HISPANIC RESPONDENTS

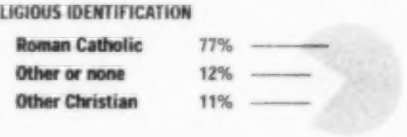
AGE	
18-29	44%
30-39	30%
40-49	16%
50 or older	10%
GENDER	
Men	49%
Women	51%
EDUCATION	
At least high school	47%
4-year college degree or higher	13%
MARITAL STATUS	
Married	55%
Single	23%
Divorced, separated	12%
Marriage-like relationship	7%
Widowed	3%
HOUSEHOLDS	
At least 1 child under 18	63%
At least 1 child in school (K-12)	46%
Only 1 adult in household	17%
More than 2 adults in household	42%
CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH SKILLS	
Speak and understand very well	23%
Speak well, but have a little trouble	19%
Speak a little bit	37%
Can't speak English	21%
If not fully confident, currently taking classes	21%
TOP STRESSES RELATED TO BEING AN IMMIGRANT	
Language barrier	17%
"Nothing" (see earlier discussion of stress factors)	16%
Job (finding, keeping)	10%
Separation from family and friends	10%

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

1990s	53%
1980s	30%
1970s	9%

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

Roman Catholic	77%
Other or none	12%
Other Christian	11%



DISTINCTIVE FINDINGS

Compared to the other three immigrant groups, Hispanic respondents were:

- More likely to have left their native country in order to find a better job (67%) and/or to be with family (41%).
- More likely to have at least one employed adult in the household (86% of households vs. 59-67% in other immigrant groups). These figures do not include households where the respondent was over age 65.
- More comfortable with the idea of family members marrying outside their culture (86% vs. 39-76%).
- More likely to say they want "to be more a part of American culture" (24% vs. 6-13%) and less likely than other groups to say they would rather keep up their native culture (27% vs. 37-54%), but equally likely to insist that it is important to do both (49%).
- More likely to feel that their child's teachers know enough about their culture (74% vs. 42-66%).
- Along with Hmong, more likely to perceive that Americans are sometimes mean or unkind to them (29%), although few said this happens often (10%).
- More likely to look to local ethnic stores and clinics as an important source of news about their ethnic group.

HMONG RESPONDENTS

AGE

18-29	26%
30-39	29%
40-49	20%
50 or older	26%

GENDER

Men	43%
Women	57%

EDUCATION

At least high school	34%
4-year college degree or higher	6%

MARITAL STATUS

Married	71%
Widowed	10%
Single	10%
Divorced, separated	8%
Marriage-like relationship	2%

HOUSEHOLDS

At least 1 child under age 18	82%
At least 1 child in school (K-12)	76%
Only 1 adult in household	18%
More than 2 adults in household	27%

CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH SKILLS

Speak and understand very well	12%
Speak well, but have a little trouble	12%
Speak a little bit	37%
Can't speak English	40%
If not fully confident, currently taking classes	17%

GREATEST STRESSES RELATED TO BEING AN IMMIGRANT

Language barrier	43%
Raising children here	14%
Money problems	9%

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

1990s	30%
1980s	55%
1970s	15%

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

Shamanistic	66%
Christian	26%
Other or none	8%

DISTINCTIVE FINDINGS

Compared to the other three immigrant groups, Hmong respondents were:

- Less likely to have a high school education (34%) and a college degree (6%).
- Less likely to feel that Americans are usually friendly to them (82% vs. 95-99%).
- More likely to report mean or unkind treatment (36%), occuring more frequently (32% said "often"), and most likely to feel a particular group of Americans is unkind to them (61% vs. 17-39%).
- Less likely to accept marriage outside their culture (39%).
- More likely to have difficulty practicing their religion here (35%) and to have felt pressure to change their religion (13%).
- More interested in local Minnesota news, as distinct from local Hmong news (42% said Minnesota events are their top news priority).

RUSSIAN RESPONDENTS

AGE	
18-29	6%
30-39	2%
40-49	10%
50 or older	83%

GENDER	
Men	34%
Women	66%

EDUCATION	
At least high school	95%
4-year college degree or higher	55%

MARITAL STATUS	
Married	60%
Widowed	24%
Divorced, separated	8%
Single	7%
Marriage-like relationship	1%

HOUSEHOLDS	
At least 1 child under 18	10%
At least 1 child in school (K-12)*	11%
Only 1 adult in household	36%
More than 2 adults in household	8%

** May not live in same household*

CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH SKILLS	
Speak and understand very well	13%
Speak well, but have a little trouble	28%
Speak a little bit	51%
Can't speak English	18%
If not fully confident, currently taking classes	31%

TOP STRESSES RELATED TO BEING AN IMMIGRANT	
Language barrier	31%
Health problems	21%
"Nothing" (see earlier discussion of stress factors)	15%

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

1990s	84%
1980s	9%
1970s	7%

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

Jewish	56%
None	32%
Other	12%

DISTINCTIVE FINDINGS

Compared to the other three immigrant groups, Russian respondents were:

- More likely to have moved directly to Minnesota from their home country (94%).
- Along with Hmong, least confident in their English skills.
- Slightly more likely to feel that Minnesotans are usually friendly to them (99% vs. 82-95%).
- Less likely to perceive mean or unkind treatment by Americans (6% vs. 19-36%).
- Most likely to be glad they left their native country, and by far the least likely to hope to return someday (3% vs. 60-71%).
- Less interested in news from Russia (10%) than in world events (75%) or even Minnesota events (15%).
- Most likely to turn to a local ethnic newspaper for news, both about world events and about their local ethnic community (80% vs. 30-65%).
- Least likely to use the Internet to get any type of news.
- Less likely to report difficulty practicing their religion here (6%).
- By far least likely to have children under 18 at home (10%).
- More likely to have visited a museum (75% vs. 38-55%).

SOMALI RESPONDENTS

AGE

18-29	49%
30-39	28%
40-49	13%
50 or older	10%

GENDER

Men	45%
Women	55%

EDUCATION

At least high school	66%
4-year college degree or higher	22%

MARITAL STATUS

Married	48%
Single	38%
Divorced, separated	9%
Widowed	4%
Marriage-like relationship	3%

HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

At least 1 child under 18	54%
At least 1 child in school (K-12)	30%
Only 1 adult in household	48%
More than 2 adults in household	18%

CONFIDENCE IN ENGLISH SKILLS

Speak and understand very well	39%
Speak well, but have a little trouble	31%
Speak a little bit	19%
Can't speak English	11%
If not fully confident, currently taking classes	51%

TOP CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION-RELATED STRESS

Separation from family and friends	22%
Language barrier	21%
Homesickness, isolation	11%

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

1990s	90%
1980s	8%
1970s	1%

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION

Muslim	81%
Christian	14%
Other or none	5%

DISTINCTIVE FINDINGS

Compared to the other three immigrant groups, Somali respondents were:

- More likely to have lived elsewhere in the U.S. before moving to Minnesota (62%).
- More likely to be geographically separated from their spouse (18% of married Somalis).
- More likely to be taking English classes if not fully confident in their fluency (51% vs. 17-31%).
- More likely to be hopeful of returning to their native country someday (71% vs. 3-62%).
- Somewhat less likely to have visited their child's school (80% vs. 92-95%).
- Less likely to have visited a park (39% never) or museum (62% never).
- More likely to turn to the Internet as a source of news, especially from their native country (42% vs. 12% to 18%).

SURVEY METHOD AND TECHNICAL NOTES

The *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* and Wilder Research Center undertook this project to gather valuable, reliable information about immigration that is not available anywhere else. We hope it proves useful to organizations that work with immigrants, to policy-makers, to immigrant groups themselves, and to their neighbors, employers, schools, faith communities, and other interested people.

The method was a random household survey in neighborhoods likely to have high concentrations of immigrants, based on school district and census data. In late 1999 and early 2000, interviewers screened more than 12,000 households selected randomly from within these neighborhoods, and identified 4,415 immigrants eligible for the survey. Of the 1,512 respondents invited to participate, 1,119 telephone interviews were completed (490 in English and 629 in Hmong, Somali, Russian, and Spanish). The response rate was 74 percent.

Scientific surveys of immigrants are rare, in the United States and elsewhere, for logistical reasons. This study demonstrates the feasibility of random sampling of immigrants in a large urban area, and of large-scale interviewing in multiple languages. The same approach could work well in other communities with large immigrant populations.

We have made available the raw data gathered in this survey for further analysis. It is stored at the Immigration History Research Center (www1.umn.edu/ihrc).

MARGIN OF ERROR

For results based on the entire survey sample, there is a 95 percent probability that the margin of error is no more than plus or minus 3 percentage points. In other words, differences of less than 6 percentage points are inconclusive.

For results based on a specific group of immigrants, such as Hispanic or Hmong, the margin of error is 6 to 7 percentage points. In other words, do not draw conclusions about differences among groups if the result varies by less than 12 to 14 percentage points.

RESEARCH PROJECT STAFF

Paul Mattessich, study director
Lennore Bevis, survey project coordinator
April Lott, data analyst
Ginger Hope, editor

Other staff contributors

Cheryl Bourgeois, Shannon Brumbaugh, Andrew S. Carlson, Joshua Carroll, Dennise Catlin, Moh Cha, Myker Cha, Zavier Chang, Santy Chiaokhiao, Phil Cooper, Kristine Danzinger, Anne Davis, Jim Durdle, Ekaterina Erickson, Sarah Forbes, Sara Gerst, Angela Gullickson, Terri Hable, Mikki Haegle, Judith Haswell, Kate Heffernan, Ronnie Higgins, Norah Hoff, Jerry Judkins, Tou Lee, Teresa Libro, Bryan Lloyd, Sandra McKee, Ron Mortenson, Brandon Moua, Nell Murphy, Marta Murray-Close, Sarah Myott, Marion Namenwirth, Ikram Omar, Ilhan Omar, Beverly Parks, Margaret Peterson, Wayne Ramsden, Jim Richardson, Jody Schueneman, Wendy Sedlak, Danielle Shelton, Dan Swanson, Karen Swenson, Andrea Thiel, Chou Thor, Kara Townsend, Karen Ulstad, Michelle Vanden Plas, Pat Vincent, Nengjo Yang, Tou Yang, Padao Yangwaue

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AMHERST H
WILDER
FOUNDATION

Wilder Research Center
Suite 210
1295 Bandana Boulevard North
Saint Paul, MN 55108

651-647-4600
research@wilder.org